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Pilula Splenetica.

O R, A

Eukine (E.)

LAUGH *R*

F R O M

A True-Blue
PRESBYTERIAN.

Read on, and you'll see the Jest.

Risum retrudo, dum tali themate ludo.



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Pilula Splenetica :

O R,

A LAUGH from a true-
blue Presbyterian.

*To Mess. Ebenezer Erskine, William Wilson,
Alexander Moncrief and James Fisher.*

VERY REVEREND,

IT seldom happens, that any Author ventures abroad in the world, without inscribing his performance to some great name or other. In opposition to the common custom, I had once a mind to dedicate this piece to my self; because I thought it might be presumed, that I would think more of it, and be readier to defend it, than any other man. But when I reflected upon the figure you have made,

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and

and the esteem you have acquired, I began to imagine, that the world would think you much more worthy of this honour than the author. I therefore humbly beg you'll take this brat of mine under your protection, and shew it some of that tenderness and respect you commonly have for your own. It would be exceeding hard for you to refuse this favour, to one who begs it of you with a pleased face and *smiling* countenance. The Child comes to you *laughing* innocently in your face : I therefore beg you'll give him a favourable reception ; and I shall always be ready to make the most thankful acknowledgments. But if you thrust this poor creature away from you, without the least pity ; it must step forward on its own legs, with as *merry* a countenance as it can. If you throw it out, I hope some well-disposed persons will give it quarters. As the times now go, it is worth its room. We have had lamentable *Cries*, and heavy *Groans* : Now, if this could beat these off the stage, and *smile* chearfully upon you, sure I am you would think the change *lightsome*.

Now, that the charms of this Child, whom I call *A Laugh*, may have some influence upon you, I shall,

1. Shew you what a *Laugh* is.
2. Notice what fund we have for *laughing* in our present situation.
3. Offer some advices which may contribute to continue this *merry* disposition.

I. I am to *shew what a Laugh is*. This I take to be an agreeable convulsion, which affects the heart

heart and most of our senses in a sudden and irresistible manner, gives a freer and brisker motion to the blood and animal spirits, removes that gloom and fullness which hangs heavy upon the mind, and by a kindly titillation makes an agreeable pleasure glance suddenly through our whole frame, and so becomes a sovereign remedy against melancholly and the spleen.

There are a great many different kinds of *laughter*, which I shall not stay to enumerate. Some of them would perhaps be too *frolicsome* for my purpose; for I only design such a grave *laugh* as is consistent with Divinity. I am not for the *laughter* of fools, which is like *the crackling of thorns under a pot*; but for such an one as is excited by proper occasions, and directed to proper objects: and this I am sure is neither condemned by reason nor revelation. As *Heracitus* constantly wept, so *Democritus* was a constant *laugher* at the follies of mankind. *Aristotle* made this a distinguishing difference between a man and a beast: *Homo* (says he) *est animal risibile, bipes*: And *Elijah* did not think it below the dignity of a Prophet, to *laugh* at the superstitious folly of *Baal's* Prophets: And *Solomon* says, *There is a time to laugh, and a time to mourn*. *Laughing* then, upon some suitable occasions, is no tash upon the character of a grave and reverend Father.

I might now enter on the second thing I proposed: but I shall first make some observations upon a regular and orderly society, and the just reasons of a departure from it; which cannot well be refused without exciting a *laugh*.

I. then, I observe, that in every regular and well

well constitute society, there must be certain laws and regulations, which distinguish that from any other of another kind. This must necessarily hold in all societies, whether civil or ecclesiastical. Episcopal, Presbyterian and Independent societies, must have something in their model which distinguishes them from one another. This cannot be refused without forcing a *smile*.

2. In every orderly and regular society, there must be different and distinct orders; without which it could neither have a becoming beauty, nor any lasting security of peace and quiet. There must be some to govern, and others to be governed, both in civil and ecclesiastical societies, *Rom. xii. 6, 7. 1 Cor. xii. 28.* This has ever obtained, and no man can refuse it without making others *laugh* at his ignorance.

3. Every one who professes himself a member of a society, must necessarily subject himself to the laws of it. This is implied in the nature of the thing: for no sooner does any one enter into a society, but he either by an express or tacite agreement parts with so much of his original liberty as is inconsistent with its laws. This must necessarily hold, if men agree to certain regulations of their own making, or if they are bound to them by their first founder. If any one should deny this, he would become the butt of all mens *laughter*, and be justly *kiss'd* at by the whole society.

4. I observe, that whosoever professes himself a member of any society, must necessarily look on himself as accountable to it for his management and behaviour. This is so plain, that none will
need

need any illustration but such as are of perverse minds. No member must be allowed to behave himself so as if he were above all law and order, unless the society has a mind to disband, and let every man return to his original liberty. But this can never take place in a religious society, where men are bound to observe these regulations which are established by divine authority. As in a civil government, none will be allowed to pass, who endeavour to overthrow the constitution, or to rail at the governors, and bespatter the government; so in a religious community, these must be restrained who pretend to do what they please. Though, in Popish countries, the Pope does what he pleases, and is *Noli me tangere*; yet among Protestants there is no such allowance. Such, having just notions of liberty and reasonable obedience, would *laugh* to see one pretend to be within rule, and yet act as if there was no rule. Nay even among the Independents, if the minority won't submit to the regulations of the majority, they must leave the congregation, and shift for themselves. But such a temper is well described in the following *Riddle* :

*I take away both old and new :
My way to me the way doth shew.*

5. In a well ordered society, there must be a power lodged somewhere to determine and decide controversies, which may threaten the overthrow of the constitution; else it is impossible for it to subsist. An architect would discover very little wisdom, in raising a building, where the materials have

have no cement to keep them in order : and the Author of nature would not discover such wisdom as he has done, did the parts of the human body ly loosely one upon another, without being linked together with joints, sinews and ligatures. As the human body appears to be a wise contrivance, when it has not only a power to receive and digest what makes for the nourishment of the whole, but also an expulsive faculty, to throw off whatever endangers the constitution ; so, if either civil or religious societies wanted this power, their dissolution would very soon follow their formation. Therefore there must be a power lodged in the hands of some, for preserving peace and order, and for preventing the bad effects of turbulent and unruly spirits. Now, *Very Reverend*, if you should hear any one deny this, I am convinced it would make you *laugh* notwithstanding your gravity. It would be like a fellow I heard of, who pled strongly against penal laws, and putting them in execution. When asked his reason : *Because* (says he) *then I could not break the law with safety ; and I am resolved to have mine own will, though I own the law is right.* This is well expressed in Mr. Ralph Erskine's Riddle :

*I clear my self from no offence ;
Yet wash mine hands in innocence.*

6. I observe, that no good member of a religious society will venture to separate from it, but upon very relevant grounds, and upon which he can acquit himself when his thoughts are most calm, and his reason most cool and sedate. What can

can be more attracting and charming to a beholder, than to see brethren, and members of the same society, living in harmony and good-will, always endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace? Now, if any one should depart from the communion of that Church of which he is a member, without relevant reasons; he is then guilty of schism and division, a sower of sedition, a fire-brand, and a promoter of such pernicious practices as tend to break the Church in pieces. Such an one would act as ridiculous a part, as a servant I heard of, who was much caressed and esteemed by the family he was in: but this made him haughty, and impatient of correction; and, meeting with a little of this, he made a secession from the family, and joined some desperate fellows to set the house and family on fire: But he was apprehended, and ended his days in a halter. Now, who would not laugh at such a mad thoughtless fellow as this? The author of the *Riddles* expresses this well:

*Chameleon like and Salamander,
In air and fire I live and wander.*

But now, *Very Reverend*, allow me to notice some things which we may reckon will justify a separation from a Church. These I think may be comprehended under the following three heads:

1. Corruption in doctrine; 2. Corruption in the fundamental laws and rules of the constitution; and 3. Corruption in practice.

1. I say, Corruption in a Church's Doctrine will justify a separation. If any Church should give up with that *form of sound words* which was taught by

our Saviour and his Apostles, and should not *contend for the faith once delivered to the saints*; but part with or corrupt those fundamental truths which are necessary to salvation, or impugn and deny these articles which she once received as the articles of her faith: in this case, a good man is not bound to continue in communion with her. But then, it is not every difference of opinion about smaller things that will justify a departure. There may be a difference of opinion about some things, and yet an unity of love and affection. There are some knotty and difficult opinions, in which great Doctors differ: and there are very few men, who think and reason much, who have not altered their opinions some time or other. Since then we can differ from our selves, should we rigidly impose our sentiments upon others, and not allow them to differ from us in the least? Would not every one *laugh* at the foolish goose, commanding her gosling to walk straight, when she herself cannot move without waigling? And would not the literal sense of the following *Riddle* make one *laugh*?

*It's day with me, and yet it's night:
I am all wrong, and yet all right.*

2. Corruption in the Fundamental Laws of the Constitution will justify a separation. Should a Presbyterian Church alter the model of her government, and, instead of Presbytery, set up Episcopacy; should they change our manner of worship for the *Common-prayer book*; or, instead of our beautiful subordination of judicatures, turn our
whole

whole Church into Independent congregations : this, I think, would be some good ground of a secession. And if a particular member should attempt any of these, then the community should turn him out, as *a wolf in sheep's clothing*, who pretends to be a Presbyterian, and yet plays a quite different game. He gives out to be for brotherly parity, and yet is never pleased unless he is made *Domine fac totum* ; that is, unless he's allowed to *rule the roast*. But would it not make one *laugh* to see such an one *get o'er the finger-ends with the spit* ?

3. I said, that corruption in Practice will justify a separation. Were most of the Ministers and members of a Church openly wicked, impious and profane ; I should be as little fond of communion with them, as of lying in bed with a leper. But still we may keep up communion with a Church where all its members are not saints. The Church is a field, where the good grain and tares grow together. Our Saviour kept up communion with the *Jewish* Church, when some of her members were very corrupt ; and likewise communicate with *Judas*, though he was the traytor. But what I mean here, by corruption of practice, is the imposing of rites and ceremonies, and binding these upon the consciences of men, though they are not commanded by our Saviour, nor deducible from his practice, nor that of his Apostles. In this case, we must *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free*. But then there are other things not determined in the word of God as to their circumstances, and are left to right reason and Christian prudence, conducted by such general rules

as these : 1 Cor. x. 31. *Do all to the glory of God ;* 1 Cor. xiv. 26. *Let all things be done to edifying ;* ver. 32. *Let all things be done decently and in order ;* Rom. xii. 5. *Let every man be perswaded in his own mind.* I need not instance many of these things which are left as to their circumstances to be determined according to the general rules of the word : only I would observe, that Church-authority properly takes place in these things, which, being revealed as to their substance, are left to be determined as to their circumstances by the general rules of the word. Obedience is required, to things revealed both as to substance and circumstances, in the name of the Lord ; the divine authority stakes them down to it : But, in determinations about the circumstances of things revealed, the Church may demand a compliance, by virtue of that authority she has from Christ to determine in such cases. Flying against and opposing Church-authority, when it acts only in this shape, discovers more of self-conceit and ignorance, than piety or solid reason ; and looks very like a fondness of riding on a certain beast some people have a great conceit of : and yet that same beast is not so wise as *Balaam's* ass ; for she *rebuked the madness of the prophet.* It would make one *laugh*, however, to see this beast kick and throw off its rider. Sure he's an expert horseman who never gets a coup.

II. But now, *Very Reverend*, I shall enter upon the second thing I proposed, which was, *To notice what fund we have for laughing in our present situation.* Here indeed we have a large field ; but I shall confine my self to what you have said in your
printed

printed *Reasons of Seceſſion*. What you ſay in your preamble to your *Reasons*, would make any one ſmile at leaſt. After you have told us what the Synod of *Perth* and *Stirling* has done in your favours, you ſay, “ You make no doubt but your “ conduct will be cenſured by many whom you “ reckoned friends, as well as thoſe who appear- “ ed keenly againſt you.” I aſſure you, *worſe gueſſers than you have got a drink* : You have ſpoke as true as if you had ſpoke by the ſpirit of prophecy. Since that time, I never heard one commend, though all condemned your conduct. Some ſay, you are like wandering ſheep, who have taken the ſturdy ; or like ſtubborn pettiſh boys, whoſe proud heart won’t allow them to come in when the door is opened, becauſe it was once ſhut upon them. Others ſay, that a little paternal correction is beſt for ſuch tempers ; and that the beſt way to cure reſentment in boys, is to keep them out till they humbly ſeek to be in.

However, you think you have enough to ſay for ſatisfying your friends, and for removing the exceptions of thoſe who are ignorant or eaſily impoſed on. But, before you come to advance your reaſons for continuing in your ſeceſſion, you enquire into the conduct of the Aſſembly 1734 ; and, in a very accurate manner, you tell us, “ That Aſ- “ ſembly was made up of a body of Reverend and “ Honourable members, many of them of a con- “ ſiderable ſtanding in the Miniſtry, and many of “ whom you ſay you regard as faithful labourers “ in the Lord’s vineyard. What they did, in put- “ ting a ſtop to the violent proceedings of former “ Aſſemblies and their Commiſſions, was joy to “ you

“ you and many through the land. You do not
 “ impute it to the intentions and inclinations of
 “ many of the worthy members of that Assembly,
 “ that the difficulties which lay in your way were
 “ not removed ; but to the opposition of some,
 “ who had an active hand in carrying on, or in
 “ concurring with the former course of defection.”

Sure these Gentlemen are obliged to you, for your kindness in commending them so much : but your flattery at first puts in mind of what your brother Mr. *Ralph* says in one of his Sermons, when speaking of some who look like Gospel-preachers. He says, *They are like a cow, who lets down her milk plentifully till near the hinder end, and then with a ketch of her foot overturns the cog and the good milk.*

Hitherto you have given the Assembly 1734 good milk : but let us see what a *ketch* you give, and spills the whole. After all your praises, you tell us : “ It is with grief you observe the connexion that is betwixt the acts of that Assembly and
 “ some acts and proceedings of the Assembly 1733
 “ and their Commission, upon which your secession was principally laid, and which appear to
 “ you destructive of the rights and privileges of
 “ this Church, and to reflect dishonour upon her
 “ glorious Head.” What becomes of your compliments now ? You make the Assembly 1734 no better than a pyot horse, having as many black spots as white. Nay more than this, 1734 and 1733 are linked together in a confederacy, and in their acts they join issue. Some say, it would be a good sport, and make one laugh, to see these two say, *Shake hands, Neighbours, and let us teach the wise of Beth better manners.*

But

But then, *Very Reverend*, you tell us, "It is evident, that Mr. *Erskine* was censured, first by the Synod, and then by the General Assembly 1733, for impugning some acts of Assembly and proceedings of Church-judicatures." Here I must very much question your evidence, since the tenor of the act you refer to says otherwise. There it is expressly said, *That the Synod of Perth and Stirling found ground to censure Mr. Erskine, and appointed him to be rebuked, on account of several expressions uttered by him in a Sermon preached before the said Synod in October last, tending to disquiet the peace of this Church, and impugning several acts of Assembly and proceedings of Church-judicatures.* By this it appears, how artfully you slur over the affair, and would make people believe, that Mr. *Erskine* was censured merely for testifying against acts of Assembly and proceedings of judicatures, in a modest and respectful manner, and on a proper occasion. Had he offered convincing arguments against the act of Assembly in a respectful manner, as he should have done, he had acted like a messenger of the Gospel of peace. But, so far from this, that he condemned it publicly by his own authority in the most bitter and virulent manner, representing the framers of that act as the worst of men. Had what he said been true, as it was false; should he have railed against Church and State, and given odious and black impressions of both, within less than half a year after the framing of the act, and that before any attempt was made to have it corrected? This scarce has a pattern or precedent. Should Mr. *Erskine* have expressed himself, as he does p. 39. of his Synodical Sermon?

mon? where he says, "It is matter of lamentation, to see some of the judicatures of this Church, whose province it is to contend for the sovereignty of Christ and the rights of his subjects, falling in with Patrons and Heritors of the nation, in opposition to the known rights of the Christian people, to elect and chuse their own Pastors." Spoke he truth here? But he goes on with calumny without proof, and says, "How are the rights of the Lord's people invaded and trode upon by violent settlements, up and down the land!" He tells us, "A cry is gone up to heaven against the builders, by the spouse of Christ, like that in *Cant. v. 7*. This cry (he says) came in before the Assembly for relief; and, instead of giving it, an act is past, giving the power of election to Heritors and Elders; whereby a new wound is given to Christ and the privileges of his subjects." Then he tells us, "Were Christ standing where he was in his stead, he would say to the framers of that act, *In as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me.*"

These words are so plain and express, that they need no comment to shew his design. The dullest of his hearers when he preached this, or of his readers when he published it, could not but understand the venom and ill-nature which run through these expressions, and many others in his Sermon. Is it possible he could contrive words fitter to tarnish and blacken the character and reputation of his brethren? Or could he chuse fitter expressions to inflame unthinking people, and inspire them with hatred and rage against the bulk of the Ministry?

nistry? Could he have delivered himself after another manner, if he had been detached from some black cabal, or an emissary hired by *Rome*, to inflame the people, and divide them from one another, that the common enemy might have an advantage against us? And what proof does he advance for his heavy charge? None but a passage in *James* about the man and the gold ring; which makes as much for his purpose as a passage out of *Thomas the Rhimer*, as I shall afterwards shew. Should the Prophets tell their own dreams as the word of the Lord, and put the stamp of divine authority upon them? *Prov. vi. 19.* the Wiseman tells us, that *a false witness that speaketh lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren*, are two of the six things the Lord hates: and the Apostle *Paul* says, *Rom. xvi. 17, 18.* Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. *Tit. iii. 2.* we are told; Ministers should speak evil of no man, be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

Now, we shall see how little Mr. *Erskine* answers this character, from a passage of a Sermon he preached at *Stirling* upon a sacramental occasion. In his 6th inference, he is shewing who they are who are attempting to shoulder Christ out of his government. Among others, he says, "These are professed Presbyterians, who, under that disguise, exercise a lordly Prelacy and dominion over the Church of Christ, in thrusting in
C "men

“ men upon congregations, without their consent,
 “ and contrary to the free choice their great King
 “ has allowed them. I fear (says he) there shall
 “ be sad reckoning ere all be done, for the vio-
 “ lent rapes committed upon the spouse of Christ.
 “ Christ mystical is wounded in the house of his
 “ professed friends; and it will be a wonder if
 “ there be not wounds for wounds ere the scene be
 “ ended.” Here he sets the trumpet to his mouth,
 like a messenger of war, and loudly sounds the a-
 larm, To stand to it, and fight like men, since they
 are ruined and spoiled, and all is going to wreck,
 the Church is in the utmost danger, and the crown
 pulled from our Saviour’s head. These words of
 fire and fury he spoke very soon after passing of
 the act 1732, though he was heard fully at the
 Assembly, and all he had to say against that act
 answered, without his being able to reply. What
 spirit could move Mr. *Erskine* to spue out such a
 stream of venomous, malicious and reproachful
 words, against his Mother and his Mother’s sons?
 Did he design to make himself remarkable for
 something, though it should be for mischief? I
 believe he never had an equal, in making such a
 groundless clamour of the ruin of the Church, if
 it was not Dr. *Sacheverel*. I shall give you his
 character, from bishop *Burnet*, vol. 2. p. 537.

“ Dr. *Sacheverel* was a bold, insolent man, with
 “ a very small measure of religion, vertue, learn-
 “ ing or good sense. But he resolved to force
 “ himself into popularity and preferment by the
 “ most petulant railing at Dissenters and Low-
 “ Churchmen, in several sermons and libels, wrote
 “ without chastness of stile or liveliness of expres-
 “ sion.

“ sion. All was one unpractised strain of inde-
“ decent and scurrilous language. When he had
“ pursued this method, he was at last brought up
“ by a popular election to *Southwark*; where he
“ began to make great reflexions on the ministry,
“ representing the Church was in danger, being
“ neglected by those who governed, while they
“ favoured her most inveterate enemies. At the
“ Assizes in *Derby*, (where he preached before the
“ judges,) and on the 5th of *November*, preaching
“ at *St. Paul's* in *London*, he gave a full vent to
“ his fury, in the most virulent declamation he
“ could contrive.” This shews, that a man of
little religion or learning may force himself into
popularity and preferment. He may raise his po-
pularity, by finding fault with all that is done in
Church and State; he may carry his point so far,
as to be transported from one place to another of
note; and his ambition may carry him on to preach
two sermons full of fury and virulent reflexions,
and a great many copies of these may go off to
inflame the nation, (40,000 of the Doctor's went
off:) Now, would it not make one *laugh* to see
people so easily catch'd by lies boldly given out,
without Scripture or reason? The Doctor's temper
and your's is well represented in the following
Riddle :

*Like bee and wasp I manage still ;
Suck ill from good, and good from ill.*

S E C T. II.

BUT now, *Very Reverend*, I shall take a view
of your reasons of secession. You advance

four of them, all exceeding weighty and strong at first view ; but when you come to explain them, they look like monsters, so disproportioned is the tail to the head of them. But however, before I come to examine the proportion betwixt their head and their tail, allow me to put you in mind of what Mr. *Fergusson* Minister of *Kilwinning* says about obedience to Church-judicatures. He was a great and good man, and bore his part of the heat and burden of the day, in opposing the errors of his time. *Pag.* 37. of his Sermon against Toleration he says, “ Thus much for guarding against the
 “ Popish tyranny. But, lest this doctrine be a-
 “ bused to cast at all publick judicatures, we will
 “ next speak somewhat to guard against Sectarian
 “ confusions. 1. Although publick Church-judi-
 “ catures have not power to bind consciences; yet,
 “ when men are in a doubt concerning a point of
 “ truth, their judgment ought to have more weight
 “ than the judgment of private men; and that not
 “ only because there are more gifts exercised to-
 “ gether, but mainly because there is a promise
 “ annexed to the commission given by Christ to
 “ publick Church-judicatures : *Matth.* xviii. 20.
 “ *Where two or three are gathered together in my*
 “ *name, there am I in the midst of them.* And 2.
 “ From this it follows, that there should be a kind
 “ of loathness to differ from Church-judicatures.
 “ A man’s grounds would be well examined, lest,
 “ if differing from these judicatures, he also differ
 “ from the truth. And 3. When they differ, they
 “ are to bear them at reverence : although in such
 “ a point they should err ; yet, for their authority,
 “ they are to be revered.” Does your pra-
 cice

etice discover you to be of Mr. Fergusson's judgment? Sure I am he was as sound a Presbyterian, and as good a man as the best of you, who thus separate for you know not what.

The first reason you advance is, *That the prevailing party at that time in the judicatures of the Church, did break down the fences and guards which former Assemblies had wisely set up, against innovations of the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of this Church.*

This is truly a heavy and bold charge, and pleads strongly in your favours, if it is true. But how do you make it out? "Why (say you) the act 1730, discharging the recording of reasons of dissent in inferior judicatures, and the act of Assembly 1732, for planting vacant Churches, were passed contrary to standing rules for passing acts that concern the Church; which require, *That they first be transmitted to Presbyteries, and their opinion and consent reported to the next Assembly, which may pass them into acts.*" But pray, Gentlemen, how do these acts thus pass break down the fences you speak of? I always thought the best fences of doctrine were the Scriptures, and the summary of them contained in our excellent *Confession*. I thought the *Book of Discipline* and our subordination of judicatures had been the best fences for worship, discipline and government. Would not all our fences for doctrine, worship, discipline and government, stood firm, though these acts had never been rescinded? But, after all, you tell the world a falsehood: For the overture of the act 1732 was sent to Presbyteries. Some sent in their consent; some proposed amendments; and others sent

sent in no opinion at all : and after all, it lay on the table a whole year longer ; and warning was given to those who sent in no opinion, that their silence would be constructed a consent, if they sent in no opinion to the next Assembly. And, after all, they made such amendments as they thought clearly took in a majority of the Presbyteries. However you tell us, “ You do not insist on this, since the Assembly 1734 has rescinded these acts.” Besides, you tell us, “ Your secession was not founded upon the passing of the acts 1730 and 1732, since you continued in the Church after these were ingrossed among the standing and binding rules thereof.” What was your secession founded on then ? “ Why (say you) it was founded upon the denouncing of the censures of the Church against us for our testifying.” Why then did you at all mention the passing of the acts 1730 and 1732 as a reason, and then you tell it is not a reason ?

*Are you here, and yet elsewhere ;
And yet you're neither here nor there ?*

But, granting that the denouncing of the censures of the Church is the first ground of your secession, then your argument stands thus : “ The prevailing party of that time broke down the fences which former Assemblies had wisely set up, for doctrine, &c. that is, they censured us four, and so broke down the fences wisely set up for doctrine, worship, discipline and government.” Indeed, *Gentlemen*, you are not blate. But who set you up for fences ? If former Assemblies set you up

up for this purpose, it was not *wisely* done: for by the course of nature you cannot stand long to be fences; and when you fall down, what will the little foxes not do? This is the first of the four reasons you advance; that is, one to every one of you: but why might you not have fixed on eight? and then you would have had two to each of you; and a twofold cord would not have been so easily broken as a single one.

But after all, *Gentlemen*, I scarce believe you are convinced in your own minds, that your first reason, *viz. the Church's censuring of you*, will justify your separation. I hope you'll not deny, that the judicatures of the Church are of Christ's appointment, and hence have authority from him to call before them the irregular and unruly, and may inflict upon them such censures as they think their crime deserves. Denying this would make one *laugh*. But perhaps you'll say, "the Church censured you for what you reckoned truth, and "the cause of Christ." I wish you may be persuaded in your own minds that you have truth on your side, and that you have come to this persuasion by a fair and impartial trial. Granting it is so, though many doubt it very much, will you not allow the Assembly to think they have truth on their side too? Is it not as likely that you may be under the influence of an erring conscience as they? and is not every man ready to be partial in his own cause? Will not this bring off every offender as well as you, if saying they are in the right be a just reason for exeeiming them from censures? Are you the first who have been censured by judicatures, who had a good opinion of themselves? Is it not plain
others

others have been censured for the same things you are guilty of? See acts of Assembly 1705 and 1708. Should not every member of a regular body look upon himself as accountable for his behaviour, and submit to the censure of his superiors, when he might be convinced he is in the wrong, if he were not wilful? Why would not Mr. *Erskine* take a rebuke from the Assembly when he deserved it? He puts me in mind of an untoward boy, whom his master could do no good upon. His master frequently ordered him to open his mouth and say *A*. But *A* he would not say, but rather chose to be whipt. His comrades asked him why he was so obstinate, telling him it was not so hard to say *A*. Well (says he) it is not so hard to say *A* neither: but if I should say *A*, the master would make me say *B* too; and I am resolved never to say that. Would not this boy's stiff temper make one laugh?

Your second ground of secession is, *That the prevailing party at that time screwed up Church-authority to an exorbitant height, by exercising a legislative power over the house of God, in opposition to the laws and ordinances of the great Lord and Master of the house; and, in consequence thereof, usurped a lordly and magisterial dominion over the flock and heritage of God.*

This is a most grievous and heavy charge; and, were it but half made good, it might well warrant all you have done. But I have always observed, that those who have least of solid argument and reason on their side, have always the boldest and biggest affirmations. But whether the words which *Zophar* unjustly applies to *Job* may

be

be justly applied to you, I refer to your own consciences, *Job xi. 3. Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?*

Let us see however what you advance. The first instance you adduce, for making good your charge, is the act 1732. "This (you say) lodging the decisive power of electing Ministers in the hands of Heritors and Elders, being Protestants, is evidently contrary to the word of God, to the example of the Apostles recorded in the *New Testament*, and to the practice of this Church ever since the Reformation." Pray what spectacles had you on when you saw all this? If the matter is so evidently against the word of God, is it not easy for you to throw up some texts of Scripture which plainly make against the act 1732? This will convince the world more than a thousand of your assertions. Do you think your credit so great, that your bare assertion will pass as current with men of sense as a Scripture-text? How is that act contrary to the Apostles practice? *They became all things to all men, that they might gain some.* And I believe the Assembly gave Heritors not of our communion, being Protestants, a right of election, because they have a great interest in parishes, and because they thought it was more probable that they might be gained over to your communion by one settled with their approbation, than by one settled against it. And, after all, are not the Gentlemen of our communion, and the Elders, a sufficient ballance to them? Since they can chuse none but one of our communion, and the people are allowed to dissent from their

choice upon reasonable grounds, would it not make one *laugh* to see your unreasonable clamour? Do you verily believe your scheme was practised by the Apostles? Has not a late learned author shewn, that there is no example in Scripture of the peoples electing, and that the Apostles elected and ordained every where? Was not this the very mind of all sound Presbyterians about the time of the *Westminster Assembly*? See what *Bastwick* says, in his book against the Independents, printed *anno* 1646: "Neither did I ever yet read in
 " the sacred Scriptures, that the people or con-
 " gregation had any hand at all in chusing of Mi-
 " nisters and Presbyters; neither were they fit for
 " that employment." Thus says he *p.* 152. and calls himself General of the Presbyterians against the Independents. Your scheme would certainly have forced a *laugh* from this Presbyterian. Giving them the right of election would have made the author look upon the following *Riddle* as no riddle:

*I'm school'd, though never at a school;
 I'm wise, and yet a natural fool.*

But, besides this, you tell us the act 1732 was contrary to the practice of the Church ever since the Reformation. Have you the face to say that your scheme is agreeable to the practice of the Church ever since the Reformation? Does the *First book of Discipline* favour your scheme, and your railing against the present management? No, it does not. *Chap. 4. par. 2.* it is said, "It ap-
 " pertaineth to the people, and to every several
 " congre-

“ congregation, to elect their Minister.” They gave this right, perhaps, for very good reasons at that time. But if they neglected to chuse one within forty days, they allowed the Church of the Superintendent, with his Council, to present a man to them whom they judged apt to feed the flock of Christ Jesus. And then, *par. 4* they say, “ If his doctrine be found wholesome, and able to instruct the simple : and if the Church can justly reprehend nothing in his life, doctrine or utterance ; they judge the Church, which before was desolate, unreasonable, if they refuse him whom the Church did offer ; and that they should be compelled, by the censure of the Council and Church, to receive the person appointed and approved by the judgment of the godly and learned.” Now, would it not make one *laugh*, to see you pretend that the *First book of Discipline* establishes your opinion of the peoples divine right of election ? Had you been living in those days, and of the same spirit you are now ; would you not have told the Council and Church, that *they committed rapes upon the spouse of Christ*, and that *Christ mystical was wounded in the house of his friends* ? Do you think the Church had any notion of the peoples divine right, when they could take it from them, if it was not exercised within forty days ? Had their right been divine, they could not have taken it from them at all ; since such a right can never be alienate. One may as well pretend to believe for me, and repent for me, as to chuse a Pastor for me, if I have a divine right to do it my self. But, besides all this, the *First book of Discipline* was nothing but an interim

act : it was never ratified by the Assembly of the Kirk ; and some who were at the framing of it, in a few years afterwards, as to the point of election, were of another mind.

The *Second book of Discipline* puts the power of election in the hands of the Presbytery, which is there called the *Eldership*. *Sett. 4. chap. 3.* “ Election is, the chusing out of a person or persons maist able, to the office that vaiks, be the judgment of the Eldership and consent of the congregation.” Now, does this look as if they thought the people had a divine right to elect ? Does it not rather intimate, that they thought they might place election in different hands, according to different circumstances which might cast up ? The Presbytery indeed was to endeavour to get the peoples consent ; but they were not to regard an unreasonable dissent, when their disapprobation was not supported with any thing against the *doctrine, life or utterance* of the person chosen. Nay, if they could object nothing as to any of these, they were to force them to accept of him with *Church-censures*. But though they made the election of Ministers stand thus at that time, yet they were not for tying themselves down to this in all time coming : see *chap. 7. sett. 6, 7, 8.* “ The final end of all Assemblies is, First, To keep the religion and doctrine in purity, without error and corruption. Next, To keep comeliness and good order in the Kirk. For this order’s sake, they may make certain rules and constitutions appertaining to the good behaviour of all the members of the Kirk in their vocation. They have power also to abrogate and abolish
“ all

“ all statutes and ordinances, concerning Ecclesiastical matters, that are found noisome and unprofitable, and agree not with the times, or are abusit by the people.” Can any one who reads this abstain from *laughing*, when you tell us the act 1732 is contrary to the *Book of Discipline*, when that very book gives Assemblies a power to abrogate what agrees not with the times, or is abused by the people? What more likely to be abused by them, than making their consent a negative upon the Presbytery, the Heritors and Elders? Did not the Assembly act agreeably to this book, when they limited their consent, and made their objecting against his *doctrine, life and utterance*, necessary for making their dissent relevant? Are you not ashamed to charge the Assembly with making laws contrary to the laws of the great Lord of the house, when no such laws are to be found? This would make one *laugh* as heartily, as a Gentleman was *laugh'd at*, who, if the story is true, was pleading against the making of some acts by the King and Parliament, because (he said) the *Magna charta* required the peoples consent to the making of these acts. But one who knew the contents of *Magna charta* told him, he might as well say *Magna farta* required their consent, and that signified no more than a *Fart*.

Well, *Very Reverend*, you know the Presbyteries did not keep the power of election still in their own hands; for in the year 1649, this was put in the hands of the Kirk-session, exclusive of all others. Would not this make one *laugh* at your wickedness or weakness, and pity it at the same time? Mr. Currie indeed owns these different methods

thods may be used by those who own the peoples divine right originally : see his contradictions p. 54. But is it not absolute nonsense, to say the people have a divine right, and that this can be justly taken from them by any body of men on earth, if they only make them a civil compliment, and tell them it was once theirs ? Thus it happens, that expert discoverers of contradictions run themselves into them. Now, *Gentlemen*, when you cry out, *The act 1732 is contrary to the practice of the Church*, and yet the Church hitherto, since the Reformation, has not practised your method ; may not people *laugh* as much at you, as they would do to see him who is crying, *Hold the thief*, catch'd with the stoln goods in his custody ?

Well, but did our Church always stick by the act 1649 ? By no means : for, from the year 1690 to the 1712, they quietly submitted to the act of Parliament ; which upon the matter was the same with the act 1732 ; for it lodged the power of electing in the hands of Heritors and Elders, being Protestants, with the approbation of the congregation. Did it ever enter into any man's *pericranium*, to load the act 1690 as Mr. *Erskine* and some others have done poor 1732 ? What could make him so bloody upon an act, which was so very like that one upon which he himself was settled ? Thus far I have deduced the practice of our Church, which has never been like the scheme Mr. *Erskine* and his party go upon. I fancy he has not derived his scheme from the Scriptures, *Books of Discipline* or our publick records, but from the *wise men of Götting* : but it would make one *laugh* to see him take these for the *wise men*

men of the Church of Scotland. However, when you pretend to support your new opinion with these things which make against you, you may not apply honest Mr. Ralph's Riddle to your selves :

*I'm an imperfect, perfect man,
That can do all, yet nothing can.*

I need not now take notice of your blaming the Assembly 1734, for their not rescinding the act 1732 because of its inconsistency with the word of God. I am afraid you are not convinced in your own minds, upon good grounds, that it was so ; and I am sure, if that Assembly had thought so, they would have condemned it upon that score. I believe the bulk, if not all of them, were men of conscience, as well as you ; and your giving a hint of the contrary, is a very backward way of repaying their kindness to you. However, you bring me in mind of a story of an honest man, whose dog fell into a deep well. He went down to pull him out of the water ; and when he was endeavouring to pull him out, the cur snapt him by the fingers. *Well!* (says the honest man) *since you're so unthankful, you shall perish for me.*

But then, a second instance you mention, of a lordly and magisterial power exercised over the heritage of God, is, " The violent settlements made in dissenting and reclaiming congregations by some late Assemblies and their Commissions." It were indeed to be wished there were fewer dissenting congregations, and that we were entirely free of the Patronage act. But could these settlements you call *violent* be easily helped? Did not
our

our judicatures make the best they could of a bad game? Was it in their power to reverse acts of Parliament? or could they decently fly in the face of the law? Or did they ever settle any Presentee whom they found insufficient for the charge, or who had exceptions made against him as to his life or doctrine? Do the *Books of Discipline* call Ministers *Intruders*, who are found duly qualified and unexceptionable, though the congregation should dissent? You know it does not. Why then have we all this clamour, and blackning of judicatures? Did not our forefathers grone longer under the yoke of Patronage, than they were quit of it? and yet they continued in unity of affection and communion, till it pleased God to deliver them from the yoke. While they were under it, they made the best of their circumstances: And you know our Assemblies have been thankful to their King, for accepting of a leet of six, and then of three, that they who had the most influence might be presented. They, it seems, thought it no *lordly power* to seek a presentation to a well qualified person, and then settle him upon a presentation. Now, if you have no better ground of secession than this, you may ty up your snuff or kindle your pipe with it; and then you may say with Mr. *Ralph*,

*Above great men I'm great and high,
Yet none so low and vile as I.*

The third instance you give of *lordly and magisterial power exercised over the heritage of God*, is,
“ The act of Assembly 1733, discharging the Ministers
“ nisters

“ nisters of the Presbytery of *Dunfermling* to dis-
“ pense sealing ordinances to any in the parish of
“ *Kinross*, without the permission and consent of
“ the Incumbent.” Is this an instance of *a lordly*
power and tyrannizing over the flock of God? Is
it a new thing, for the censures of the Church to
pass against those who encroach upon their neigh-
bour Minister’s charge? Did not the Assembly
1647 make an act against such as withdrew them-
selves from the publick worship of their own con-
gregations? And is it not the province of superior
judicatures, to correct and censure the irregularities
and disorders of inferior ones? If it were not so,
what should we land in, but everlasting confusion
and disorder? And, instead of being Presbyteri-
ans, would not every one turn Independent in his
own way? Every man, guilty of disorders, will
pretend he has reason for what he does, and put
the best face on his own actions: But single per-
sons must not be their own judges, but submit to
the sentence of those who are their lawful superi-
ors, where they require no sinful compliance.
What says the *Second book of Discipline*, which you
pretend to admire? See *chap. 7. sect. 9.* “ They
“ have power to execute Ecclesiastical discipline
“ and punishment upon all transgressors, and proud
“ contemners of the good order and policy of the
“ Kirk; and sae the haill discipline is in their
“ hands.” Now, *Gentlemen*, would it not make
one *laugh* to see you found your secession upon the
doing of that which the rules of the Church al-
lows them to do? You may with better reason
secede from your parishes, if they won’t allow you
to go, when you please, and *water* other Churches,

and draw their stipend at the same time. The *Books of Discipline* reckon it no *intrusion*, when a superior judicature, in the fear of God, provides a vacancy with an unexceptionable man, for promoting the salvation of souls: and far less can it be called *intrusion*, when a person is settled upon a call, and no other person upon the field, and is unexceptionable at the same time. Now, when you make such a mournful complaint without ground, may you not apply the following *Riddle* to your selves?

*I always joy, yet mourn in season;
I weep, and yet I have not reason.*

S E C T. III.

BUT now, *Very Reverend*, I come to the third ground of your secession; which is, *That the prevailing party pursued such measures, as did actually corrupt, or at least had a direct tendency to corrupt the doctrine contained in our excellent Confession of Faith.* This you endeavour to make good, by telling us, “That when gross errors are vented in a Church, and no suitable testimony emitted against them, this has a tendency to corrupt the doctrine professed in the Church.” What measures did that party pursue, which tended to corrupt our *Confession*? It is true, they settled some parishes upon a minority of voices and a presentation; but these who were settled solemnly subscribed the *Confession of Faith*. I hope this did not tend to corrupt it. But perhaps you think the measures they took against your self had this tendency.

dency. Do you look upon your selves as the foundation of sound doctrine, and your sentiments as the test by which this must stand or fall? Or do you think none can be sound in the faith, but such as have derived their knowledge in Divinity from you? This would make one *laugh* at your modesty. First, you tell us, “ of the abounding “ infidelity and the daring impiety of the profane “ Wits of the age, who make no scruple to run “ down the sacred mysteries of Christianity.” Well, what connexion has all this with the measures of the party you inveigh against? Must it not be a new kind of Logick, that can make out your conclusion from the principles you lay down? Are these profane Wits you speak of, members of our Church? or are they commended by her? Will the party you speak of be disobliged, though you testify against such profane persons in the strongest terms you please? Will they not think your zeal better spent this way, than in the way you do it? They may perhaps *laugh*, if you confute them as I heard one confute the infallibility of the Pope; *The Papists* (says he) *say that the Pope is infallible; but I deny it: They are confuted there.* If your demonstration against them be no stronger than this, it will be no better than a blast of wind. Secondly, you tell us, “ Such damnable errors have been taught in our Church, as “ tend to lead men into infidelity; and yet (you “ say) no testimony has been given against them.” You instance Professor *Simson*, “ who (you say) “ denied the necessary existence and the supreme “ Deity of the Son of God; and yet (you say) all “ the resentment the Assembly 1729 showed a-

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“ against

“ gainst this blasphemer, was only to suspend him
 “ from teaching and preaching, till it should be
 “ thought proper to release him.” If this were
 never so true, still you are out in your Logick.
 For what connexion has the the measures the party
 you complain of pursued, with Professor *Sim-
 son’s* doctrine? Did not Professor *Simson* utterly
 deny what was laid to his charge? Did he not
 bring a great many witnesses for his exculpation?
 Did he not give in a confession of his faith, on the
 head of the Trinity, which was sustained as or-
 thodox, agreeable to the Scriptures and our *Con-
 fession*? Did he not tell them, that if they con-
 demned him for these things, they would condemn
 the innocent? Did not the Assembly suspend him
 from teaching and preaching, more upon presump-
 tion than clear evidence? Was not this a testi-
 mony against Arianism, when they punished him
 for a presumption of it? What testimony would
 you have given? Would you have a poor man
 solemnly delivered over into the hands of the de-
 vil, who declares himself innocent? Is not this
 like the cruelty of the unjust servant, who would
 not forgive his fellow-servant a few pence, though
 his lord forgave him many talents? After all, is
 it not very *merry*, to see you trump up a stale story
 for your secession, though you continued several
 years in our communion after this happened? I
 am sure you could not miss to *laugh in your sleeve*,
 when you wrote down this as a reason of leav-
 ing the Church.

But then, *Gentlemen*, you tell us, “ Professor
 “ *Campbell* at *St. Andrew’s* his bold reflexions on
 “ Natural and Revealed Religion; and what Mr.
 “ *Wallace*,

“ *Wallace*, Minister of the *New Gray-Friars*, says
“ on Positive Institutions, have the same tenden-
“ cy.” These Gentlemen, you think, are like-
wise guilty of damnable errors. If they are or not,
I shall not determine. They are now before the
judicatures of the Church, and you may have free
access to libel them, and make it good if you can :
and if you can knock them down by dint of ar-
gument, it will add much to your reputation. But
be sure to rub up your Logick before you attack
them : for I know these two will dispute as despe-
rately as *Aristotle* himself; were he alive; and if
you be not well seen in *Barbara* and *Celarent*, and
Baralippton too, it will be a wonder if they run you
not into a *Bocardo*; and that may raise such a laugh
as will be too hard for your gravity.

Fourthly, you tell us, “ That the method of
“ preaching practised by a great many, who have
“ lately entred into the Ministry, shew that they
“ have so far discarded all the peculiar and super-
“ natural doctrine of the Gospel, that one would
“ scarce know by their discourse, if they are so
“ much as professed Christians.” If this were true,
does it make good your general charge upon the
measures of the prevailing party ? Still your Lo-
gick is lame : for *a good cow may have a bad calf*
at a time, and it may not be her fault. Now, you
are erected into a Presbytery; let us see what
kind of *calves* you’ll bring forth. I’m sure, if they
take it of their mother, *they’ll be loud in the lone*,
and they say that makes but a bad milk-cow. In-
deed, *Gentlemen*, you give the young Ministers a ve-
ry sorry character. If they have *discarded the pecu-*
liar doctrines of Christianity, they are not the Mini-
sters

sters of Christ, but mere Heathens in the mask of Christianity. If you know some to be of this stamp, why do you not discover them, and bring them to punishment? Why do you wrap up all in the same general and odious charge? Is this a candid or honest part you act? Should you not separate the good from the bad, if you can? Were I to take your way of proving things, I could blacken the best and most honest set of men living; that is, by bare assertions. Nay, by this method, I could prove Mr. *Erskine* guilty of a very damnable thing; for I might say, that he gets several foreign bills paid him, which come from the old blade in *Rome*, as a reward for his sowing all the division and disorder he can. But unless this be true, saying it won't make it so: but if it were true, it would make one laugh at seeing the spring of motion. Your zealous pretences, and this, would explain this Riddle:

*I'm guileful like an hypocrite,
Yet without guile an Israélite.*

But now, Very Reverend, your last ground is, That the prevailing party at that time restrained Ministerial freedom and faithfulness, in testifying against the defections and backslidings of the times.

What were these backslidings of the times, against which you were restrained from testifying? Were they Atheism, Deism or Infidelity? No! Were they Arianism, Socinianism, Antinomianism, or any other black *ism*? No! Were they backslidings adopted by the Church, against our doctrine, worship, discipline and government? No! for the Con-
fession

profession of Faith is still our standard; our worship the same it was; and our government is still by Kirk-sessions, Presbyteries, Synods and General Assemblies: (our discipline is indeed a little enervate.) Were they *backslidings* of heart and life, against which you were restrained from testifying? No! Sure here was a large field for testimonies! Why do you complain of restraint? Why, what was the matter? You tell us, p. 19. "Mr. Erskine" "was censured for testifying against the act 1732." That is, He was censured for asserting, That the Assembly had by that act shoulder'd Christ out of his government, robbed Christ's people of their rights; that they had receded from the corner-stone, rejected Christ in his authority, and done what was in their power to bring about the overthrow of the Church of Scotland; besides a great deal of scurrilous and defaming language against his Mother and his Mother's sons. Now, don't you think it reasonable, that his Mother should rebuke him for such language, especially when he appeals to her for justice? Does he not by this own her authority, if he was not in jest, and thought he was able to kick against her, and was resolved, if she did not say as he said, to call her *Harlot* to her face? Now, when a son becomes so untoward and undutiful, should not his mother go further than a rebuke, and turn him out of doors, if she is able? I believe every body would laugh at a fond mother's simplicity, if she did otherwise. Such management would answer the following *Riddle*, if you put mother for husband:

*My husband's here, and yet he's gone;
We differ much, and yet are one.*

Yet

Yet you have the confidence to tell us, “ That
 “ when the sentence of suspension passed upon Mr.
 “ *Erskine* and you, then Ecclesiastical tyranny
 “ undermined the foundation.” Why so? pray.
 I thought our constitution had been *built upon the*
foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, Christ him-
self being the chief corner-stone, and secured to us
 by several acts of Parliament. Was the founda-
 tion undermined, when you were censured for re-
 viling and contemning a judicature clothed with
 Christ’s authority? Have you so little modesty,
 as to make Mr. *Erskine* the foundation of our
 Church? The sentence past against him, I own,
 tended to undermine him, as he had endeavoured
 to undermine a great many others. He was like
 to be served in the same manner as *Adonibezek* was :
 And who would not *laugh*, to see cunning under-
 miners overthrown by springing a mine upon them
 in a lawful manner? This would make the fol-
 lowing *Riddle* no paradox :

*Her womb which once my substance gave,
 Will very quickly be my grave.*

But then, you tell us, “ This restraint of Mi-
 “ nisterial freedom was the first and more imme-
 “ diate point, upon which your secession more im-
 “ mediately turned.” If this is true, are you not
 very inconsistent with your selves? You give it
 out, *That the Church of Scotland have broken*
down the fences, which were wisely set up, for do-
ctrine, worship, &c. That they exercise a lordly do-
minion over the heritage of God, contrary to the laws
of the great Lord of the house ; and, That they pur-
sue

such measures as tend to corrupt the doctrine contained in our excellent Confession. All these, I own, are great slanders and lies: but, if you were so blind as to think they were true, you should not have staid in communion with so corrupt a Church till she thought you were not worth the keeping, but should have renounced all intercourse with her both as to spirituals and temporals. But still you think the hire of a harlot is good to have; and though you have fairly renounced communion with her, yet you have a mind to eat her bread, and then lift up your heel against her. You were content to continue in her communion, so long as she allowed you to do what you pleased; but because she calls you *Nitte now*, you are evens with her, and call her *Scabbed pow*. But would it not make one *laugh*, to see one, over-run with scurvy, refuse to dine with others, because they have some pimples on their face?

But then, *Very Reverend*, because the act 1733 against the four Brethren was the grand mischief and crowning defection of the Church of *Scotland*, upon which your secession turned; you begin to doubt, if the kindness of the Assembly 1734 was a real one or not, or if they have effectually dispatched that desperate enemy of yours 1733: at least you alledge they have not done it formally; and who knows but he may still arise, sword in hand, and destroy you? Indeed, *Gentlemen*, 1733 was the hardest foe you ever grappled with since *Dame* cradled your head. His motto was, *Nemo me impune lacessit*. However, you need not be at the pains to dispute whether he is materially or formally dead; he is effectually dead as to any harm

he can do you, if it is not your own fault. The Assembly 1734 has shackled his hands and feet : so you need not fear him, if you'll only be good bairns, and save your selves. But your disputing about the Assembly's kindness puts me in mind of a queer story, which would make *one laugh*. A metaphysical Gentleman, who was guilty of certain crimes and misdemeanors, got a kick in a tow. But before he was strangled, some good friends of his came in and cut the tow, and produced a warrant for his living. He told his friends, they had saved his bacon *materially*; but unless they burnt the tow, he did think he could live *formally* for all their warrant. *Oho ! (say they) if you stand on this punctilio, we have no more to say.* So up he goes, and gave the company some diversion to see him hang himself. This management was pretty like the following *Riddle* :

*I'm free, and yet I am confin'd ;
I see, and yet am very blind.*

However, *Gentlemen*, I don't think you act a friendly part to your selves, in reviling the Assembly 1734, and in giving them no better quarters than you did to those of 1733. Does that man stand a fair chance for protection, who equally beats friends and foes ? When you put them all in one class, and describe their characters in colours equally black and odious ; when your hand is against every man, do you not provoke every man to stretch his hand against you ? And, to be sure, if all join to let 1733 loose upon you, he'll shake your doublet better than ever.

But

But pray, *Gentlemen*, what has the Assembly 1734 done, that it thus disoblige you? They rescinded the acts 1730 and 1732; they muzzled your enemy, and ordered you to be restored to your charges upon suitable application; they ordered commissioners to be sent up, to petition for rescinding the Patronage act; they made the deeds of the Commission reversible; they have shewn, that the Assembly's deeds are not like those of the *Medes and Persians*, which could not be reversed, but that they must yield with great respect to your Reverence. These are great things, and the Church puter now than when you were in her communion. What then can be the matter, *Gentlemen*? "Why, (say you) the Assembly 1734, in their act, refuse to enquire into the steps of the proceedings taken by the several judicatures. 2dly, They peremptorily discharge the Synod of *Perth* and *Stirling* to judge of the legality or formality of the proceedings of the Church-judicatures in your affair." Were they to blame in this? Had they enquired into all the steps of the affair, when would they have ended? The party which condemned you, would never have allowed themselves to be condemned, without being heard and tried; and this, in all probability, would have made the cure worse than the disease. Upon this consideration, the Assembly was wise in making no enquiry. But perhaps you think, *the more mischief the better sport*; and that in this event you would have had a good fund for *laughing*.

Was the Assembly 1734 faulty, in discharging the Synod of *Perth* and *Stirling* to judge of the legality or formality of the Assemblies and Commis-

sions proceedings? It seems you think so. But whether would you have the head to direct and judge for the feet, or the feet to act this part for the head? Every body I ever heard of thinks it is the head's part to do this for the feet: but if you are for inverting the order, you may henceforth walk upon the crown of your heads, and turn up your feet; and when your hinder parts are exposed to the free air, perhaps your heads may be the better for it. But sure I am it would make one *laugh* to see such a way of walking.

Well, what did the Assembly 1734 do more? "They ordered (say you) the Synod to proceed in the affair of the four Brethren, as they saw most justifiable and expedient for preserving the authority of the Church." Was it a great crime for them to do what the word of God, the *Book of Discipline*, and all the Protestant *Confessions* allow them to do? Would you have the Church without authority, and every man allowed to do what he pleases? Would you have our Church, like the men of *Laiſb*, *Judg. xviii. 7. careless and secure, and none among them to put any man to shame for what he does?* "Ay, but (say you) the Ecclesiastical authority was lifted up against the unerring rule of the word." What *word* do you mean? Not the word of God: for by this word, empowering judicatures to censure persons guilty of calumny, disorders, irregularities and disobedience, they proceeded. By *the rule of the word*, then, you must mean the rule of your own word; for against you *was the authority of the Church lifted up*. But, *Gentlemen*, if you give us a rule, pray give us one that is not *out of rule*: for if the
rule

rule is irregular, to what purpose serves the rule? Such a rule surely would make one *laugh*. This would look very like this remarkable *Riddle*:

*It's day with me, and yet it's night;
I am all wrong, and yet all right.*

Well, what did the Assembly do more? Say you, "They expressly declare, That the ground and reason they proceeded upon, in empowering the Synod as above, was the consideration of the lamentable consequences that have followed, and may yet follow upon a separation of the four Brethren." Here, you think, they make you pretty considerable, men of great consequence and mighty weight; and that they were afraid, lest you four, with your mighty backing, like an overflowing flood, would sweep away all your opposers; and that, because of this lamentable consequence, they were content to do something in your favours. Well, *Gentlemen*, for as formidable as you are, I would not have you high-minded, but rather fear: for as high as you think your selves, it is very possible to pull down your beavers; and then it will make people *laugh*, to see some walking with bare heads, who strutted formerly with plumager feathers. You may get *Hosannas* to day, but to-morrow you may have *Crucify them*.

The members of the Assembly certainly acted like the servants of the Prince of peace, when they empowered the Synod to do what they did, to prevent bad consequences, though that which was the occasion of the consequences was not bad in itself.

"O! but (say you) the Assembly 1734 did not
"so

“ so much as acknowledge the sinfulness of the
 “ act 1733, to the glory of God.” O admirable
 modesty ! O amazing humility ! You’ll not only
 have the Assembly 1734 to acknowledge you very
 considerable, but likewise to own that those who
 meddled with you were guilty of a great sin. Who
 would not think it a great sin, to censure four men
 so blindly zealous, and so uniformly constant and
 true to calumny, reproach and self-conceit ? Well
 may you four say to those who censured you, *Odi
 profanum vulgus, & arceo*. Well, *Gentlemen*, it is
 not he who commendeth himself who is approved,
 but he whom a better judge than himself commends.
 Would it not make one *laugh*, to think that there
 is but one Holy Infallible Father in the Popish
 countries, and that of late four Holy Infallible Fa-
 thers have started up in the Church of *Scotland* ?
 It will be a wonder if you come not to *Logger-
 heads* about the Supremacy. I really think Mr.
Erskine deserves it. He was the first in the *play*,
 and is the most personable man. Therefore I would
 have the other three to mount him as high as they
 can, arrayed in such Royal apparel as may suit his
 gravity, with a tobacco-pipe in his mouth instead
 of a mitre ; and then proclaim before him, *This is
 the man whom we and our party delight to honour*.
 And then he may say, as the author of the *Riddles*
 well expresses it,

*I’m black and lovely, dim and bright ;
 Immortal, yet a mortal wight.*

Well, what did the Assembly 1734 do more ?
 “ Why, (say you) they plainly assert, That there
 “ is

“ is an unanimity of sentiments among the mem-
“ bers of this Church, upon material and funda-
“ mental points, which more nearly concern the
“ promoting the interest of our blessed Lord and
“ Saviour.” Well, does the Assembly lie when it
says so? Can you fix on any material and funda-
mental point in which they differ? If you are
conscious to your selves of differing from all the
rest in some material points, you are obliged to the
Assembly in their thinking better of you than you
deserve. “ Ay, but (say you) if the difference is
“ only about smaller matters, then we must be
“ reckoned Schismatics.” *Gentlemen*, the ante-
cedent is true, and the consequence just. I believe
no man who understands the controversy, will call
in question the truth of what the Assembly says;
and will likewise own, that for once you have
drawn a very just conclusion. All you can fix on
the Church of *Scotland*, to justify your separation
from her, is, “ That she has made a rule for set-
“ tling vacancies, materially the same with that
“ upon which you your selves were settled, and a
“ few settlements not so full nor harmonious as
“ could have been wish’d.” Now, if this be a
just ground of separation, let the impartial world
and your own consciences judge: and if it is not,
let all men of sense *laugh* at your folly. And who
would not *laugh*, to see you separate, because you
cannot get a whim of your own made a rule of
settlements, which never was a settled rule of the
Church of *Scotland*? And yet, after all, you have
the confidence to say, that the Assembly 1734 drop
every part of your testimony. Did they drop your
testimony, when they removed that which was the

occa-

occasion of your testimony? But this is the grievous part of the quarrel: They did not adopt all your sentiments, and record with great respect and reverence the noble stand you made, and the courage you had to *bell the cat* with one Assembly, and make another do what you pleased; and then record all, *ad perpetuam rei memoriam*. Really, *Gentlemen*, you are very merry: The Assembly knew better things; and they *laugh*, when they see *dawted bairns turning more dortie*.

But pray, *Gentlemen*, what disoblige you so much at the Reverend Synod of *Perth* and *Stirling*, whose hearty affection to you and the peace of the Church shone so conspicuously in their actions? They opened their arms to receive you, without any application; and, by virtue of that power they had from the Assembly, restored you to your several charges, and united you to the communion of this Church; and yet you shewed little regard for their kindness, or respect for what they did. Their declaring it their opinion, That restoring you to your charges, tended to restore peace, and preserve the just authority of the Church in the exercise of all Ministerial privileges and functions, and to promote the edification of the members of the body of Christ; this I believe pleased you pretty much: for full well do you love to be stroaked, and to be reckoned the authors of peace, though you every where sow war and division; and to pass for the only supports of the Church's just authority, though you continually kick against it; and to be thought the only edifiers of the body of Christ, and that all the rest are *sleepy dumb dogs*: This you will not controvert.

And

And rarely would you support the authority of the Church, if it were put in your hands; and rare things would ye do. Well, *Absalom* had a bonny out-side; but a hollow heart, and a hanget hinder end: He rebelled against his father, and you do it against your mother.

Well, the first part of the Synod's act you don't quarrel: but one part of it disoblige you. What is the offensive part? Say you, "The Synod enjoins us, to carry towards the Lord's servants, their Brethren, Ministers of this Church, and their respective flocks and charges, as the Ministers of Christ and his Gospel ought to do." And does this offend you? The Synod's advice is almost the same with that of the Apostle, *Live in peace, and the God of peace shall be with you.* Would you rather wish they had enjoined you to live on robbery and spoil, in war and division? Did you want a commission from them, to take whips in your hands, that you might drive all *buyers and sellers* out of the land? This would have been excellent work for you: and a good hand you would have made on't; first, to drive away the robbers; and then, to seize on the substance. But, because the Synod enjoins you to live in peace with your brethren the Ministers of Christ, and you are for war; therefore you make them, the Assemblies 1733 and 1734, *all one swine's pigs.* But would it not make one *laugh*, to see these *birds of a feather flock together*? And when they are one every way, as you make them to be, then some birds of prey may meet with their merchant, and be capable of doing eyes harm. Perhaps you are offended at the Synod, because they have solved

one of the famous *Riddles* in the literal sense with respect to you. It is,

*I am divorc'd, yet marry'd still,
With full consent, yet 'gainst my will.*

But, before I finish this Section, I cannot but take notice of the sly art you have of calumny and detraction, and then foisting in texts of Scripture, which make as little for your purpose as *the man in the moon*. Pag. 38. you tell us, "If backslidings were acknowledged, if the Church would return to the Lord, (that is, as you say, to the rule prescribed in his word, for directing the Church how to behave in the house of God,) this would be matter of joy to you and many through the land." Here you alledge the Church has departed from the rule of the word in her judicative capacity, and is guilty of great backslidings from the rule laid down in the word. What these are, you don't mention; but, no doubt, you mean the act 1732, and that of 1733, which censured you, were the distinguishing backslidings: from these you would have them to reform *according to the rule of the word, and pattern shown in the mount*; and then, to impose upon unthinking people, you throw up the reformation in good King *Josiah's* time, and that which we read of 2 *Chron. xxx.* Would it not make any wise man laugh, to see such *bocus pocus* and juggling as this? Is this a precedent of what you would be at? or does it support your darling point, of giving the people a right of electing in *communi*? Is there any thing in these reformati-
ons, but what the Church of *Scotland* is heartily

tily for, except what is peculiar to the *Jewish* state? I hope you, who are so much for liberty, would not have us back to a state of bondage. Are you not ashamed, thus to abuse the people, in giving them bad impressions of your Mother-church, by misapplying Scripture? You might as well have cited, *Adam, Seth, Enos*, to prove that the Church has departed from the rule of the word in her behaviour in the house of God. Now, is not this way you take of proving things, sufficient to make one *laugh*? Is not this way of reforming and proving something like this famous *Riddle*?

*To heaven I fly, to earth I tend;
Grow better still, but never mend.*

S E C T. IV.

BUT now, *Very Reverend*, I come to those things which you say would perhaps please you, were they gone into, and give you a pleasant prospect of uniting with the Church. But ere I enter on these, I must tell you, that the modest proposals you make, were you not men of known temperance, look very like the effect of a brandy posset, qualified with a liberal dose of *Jamaica* pepper. There is such a lordly and magisterial air in them, and an usurping authority over our Church-judicatures, which are composed of members of the best sense and most shining gifts, that they look extremely like the productions of a light and giddy head. Would it not make one *laugh*, to see four men, whose gifts are not much above the ordinary level, fancy themselves the supreme Lawgivers of the Church of *Scotland*, and all the Ministers their scholars, to whom

they prescribe their lesson. This really savours somewhat of the spirit of *Nebuchadnezzar* the Great, who, walking in the palace of his kingdom, said, *Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my Majesty?* Dan. iv. 30. But in the midst of his triumph, he heard a voice, saying, *O Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee, and they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling-place shall be with the beasts of the field.*

But now, let us hear your magisterial dictates. 1st, You demand, *That a seasonable warning be committed against gross errors and infidelity, and that the supreme Deity of the Son of God be asserted.* Does our Church espouse gross errors, or countenance infidelity? Or does she deny the supreme Deity of our blessed Saviour? Do they not testify against errors upon all proper occasions? Is not the supreme Deity of our Saviour asserted in the *Confession of Faith*, founded on the Scriptures? and do not all the members of our Church own this as the confession of their faith? Would it not make one laugh, to see your malicious insinuation of the contrary? You know, none are readier to cry, *Hold the thief*, than he who has the stolen goods. Next, you want, *That the highest censures of the Church should pass against William Nimmo.* How steady are you, *Gentlemen*, to severe discipline when the case is not your own! That young man, without all doubt, said very shocking, and some very senseless and stupid things. But did not the Professor shew the highest displeasure at his discourse? Was he not as forward as any, to inflict a suitable cen-

censure upon him? And was he not expelled the Hall with ignominy and disgrace, and for ever rejected as a student of Divinity? And did he not humbly profess his sorrow for what he had ignorantly done? Now, *Sir Reverend*, the highest censure of the Church is only designed for the obstinately impenitent. Now, who would not laugh at your ignorance and malice in endeavouring to blacken every one's reputation? You likewise desire, that the highest censures of the Church be inflicted on Professor *Campbell* and Mr. *Wallace*, if, after enquiry, they are found guilty of the gross errors alledged against them. All I have to say as to this is, That these Gentlemen are now before their Judges; and if they have any reasonable conviction of their being guilty of an error, or errors, I hope they'll think themselves obliged to these who put them right. And they who are their Judges will know how to proportion the censure to the crime proven against them, though you had given them no direction. But you really bring me in mind of a cross-grain'd boy, who was beat by his mother, for an ill-scraped tongue, and a great knack he had of lying; upon this he left the house. His mother sent some of his brothers to desire him to return; and he sent her back word, *That never the length of his toe he would come, unless she paid Archy and Robie, worse than she had paid him; and it may be not then neither.* Would not this boy's temper make one laugh?

*I'm full, and yet I'm empty still.
I'm cross'd, and yet I have my will.*

2dly, You require, *That the Act 33. censuring Mr. Erskine, be repealed, and all the arbitrary proceedings of Church-judicatures, appointing high censures to be inflicted on the four Brethren, be declared null and void.* You have already been told, that all these are truly null and void, as to any harm they can do you, if you'll only return, and be upon your good behaviour. But your design in this, is, to make the world believe you are entirely innocent, and that restoring you to your charges, was not an act of favour, but of justice. I'll tell you a story of a fellow who was once sentenced to be hanged, and afterwards had a pardon offered him, provided he would promise to steal no more of his neighbours sheep; upon this he told the Judge, *He would scorn to accept of the pardon, unless they would repeal the act for stealing sheep, and allow him to beat the shepherds into the bargain.* But then you would have all Ministers censur'd who don't testify against the corruptions of the times, according to the act *October 3. 1648.* By this you would insinuate, that these things you are testifying against, are the very things which were the corruptions of these times; than which nothing can be more false. Let these who are for sectarian, such as Independent, and Antinomian, or Erastian principles, or for defections of heart and life be censured severely. Let all who are guilty of lying, backbiting, uncharitable dispositions, or divisive principles, be censured; and then see who has the best share. But would it not make one laugh to hear some talk of censuring those who don't testify against the corruptions of the times, when they do all that is in their power to weaken the authority

rity of these who should censure. Censuring will be to little purpose, till some are taught to stand more in awe of them. Church-censures, and some offenders, are somewhat like this Riddle.

*My foes defeat me every way,
And yet they never gain the day.*

3tio, You demand a repeal of the act 33. against the Brethren of Dunfermling, and an allowance to Ministers to dispense sealing Ordinances to all such as have Ministers intruded upon them contrary to the word of God, and the rules of this Church founded thereupon. To what purpose do you desire the repeal of that act? by the repeal of this, you must repeal other acts contained in its bosom, against such courses as they encouraged and practised: besides, that act does *Dunfermling* Ministers no manner of harm. The Assembly by that act of theirs, went upon warrantable precedents, and only desired these Brethren to do that which was their duty, and what they should have done in a consistency with themselves; since they inrolled other two, who were settled as much against the peoples consent, as the Gentleman they discountenance; though, as I am told, he is far from being inferior to those they care for, for all ministerial qualifications, perhaps his wanting some people's *Sibboleth* may make a difference.

You likewise want, *That Ministers should be allowed to dispense sealing ordinances to those who have Ministers intruded upon them contrary to the word of God.* Would you have this liberty given to every one who is bold enough to say that settlements
are

are contrary to the word of God, without any proof but his bare testimony? What would be the consequence of such a permission? would not everlasting confusion, and perpetual disorder take place? And would we not always find some ambitious enough to raise their own reputation, by decrying and blackening the reputations of others? by giving them the worst and most odious names. Now would it not make one *laugh* to see some men abundantly little every way, making themselves great, as debasing every one else, and trampling under foot all manner of authority; and by pretending to countenance all their disorders by the word of God, and the rules of the Church, when in the mean time both are expressly against them. Would it not raise a *laugh*, to see some strain at gnats and swallow camels; to see them remove their zeal from great and weighty matters, and appear with great warmth for things of a lower kind, neglecting the essential parts of the Tabernacle, and contending furiously about placing a particular pin, till they overthrow the whole.

4to, You demand, *That it shall be declared, that the accepting of Presentations is contrary to the principles of this Church, if the Patronage-act is not repealed.* What need is there for doing that which is done already? Has not our Church always declared this was a grievance, which she would rejoice to be quit of: But this you would insinuate, that these you call the prevailing party are fond of the continuance of Patronages. I believe there are few or none of our Clergy who would not be as glad of the happy deliverance as some who make a greater noise; though at the same time, they

would not be for your scheme, which they think very unreasonable. Besides this, you want *that every young man accepting of a Presentation, should have his licence taken from him, and that a minister doing so, should be suspended, and, upon his adherence to it, should be deposed.* Is not this a very modest proposal of yours, to make the Church declare war openly against the State? Or would it serve any wise end or purpose? Can the Church pretend to make void an act of Parliament; and will not patience and humble petitions have a happier effect, than the strong hand: And if the Patronage-act should not be rescinded, as I sincerely wish it may, would not the practice of our forefathers, in this case, be preferable to your proposal, namely, to petition his Majesty to accept of a Leet of six, named by the Presbytery or Synod, as the ablest Preachers in their bounds, for any Vacancy that falls out? When our forefathers obtained this, they were thankful for it, and settled the person presented. But it seems you would have acted another part, had you lived in their days, and have deprived young men, and suspended or deposed Ministers upon an acceptance. Would it not make one *laugh* to see some so keen for suspensions, and deposing of others, tho' violently against themselves? 'Tis somewhat like a Woman I heard of, who dabbled frequently in irregular pleasure herself, and yet would rail and fly out against the indecency of a man's kissing of his wife before folks. Some people are quick-sighted to *spy a mote in their brother's eye, who are blind to a beam in their own.*

Besides this, you demand, *That no settlement shall take place in a vacant Congregation without a majori-*

rity of those who are admitted to full communion with the church. Here at last you tell us what you mean by the congregation ; 'tis the communicants: And it must certainly be owned, that a very great regard should to be had to their approbation or dissent: And if they advance reasonable grounds for dissenting, I think that man too forward who ventures upon the charge, when such are utterly averse. But then, 'tis very possible, they may be wrought up to make opposition, without any just Ground: and, in that case, a bare wilful opposition is not to be regarded. But then, that the communicants have a divine right to elect their Pastors I utterly deny, or that it was ever the established principle of this Church. You don't pretend here to support your opinion with Scripture-proofs; only you hint at that Text in *James*, about the man and the gold-ring: this, you say, proves, *That as to spiritual privileges we must not prefer the rich to the poor.* I grant it, the contemned beggar has as good a right to the blessings of our Saviour's purchase, as the crowned Head. But this does not establish your point, unless you show clearly from Scripture, that electing of a Pastor to a parish, is a blessing purchased by our Saviour to all believers, or to the believers of a parish. The last you cannot shew; because the erecting of distinct parishes is not a divine, but a civil deed, and took not place till sometime after the spreading of Christianity. The Author of the *Modest Enquiry* has made it pretty plain, that it was not the people, but the Apostles who every where elected and ordained to the Ministry. But whether or not Pastors in all ages of the Church are to follow their example in this,

this, is another question. 'Tis probable they are not tied down to this, but are to behave in this matter according to the circumstances of the times, and the general rules of the word. Would it not make one *laugh*, to see you call the people's right divine, when you have not one text to support it?

But take their Right for granted, and several absurdities follow upon it: then husband and wife, lass and lad, bond and free, have all an equal right. Women cannot be deprived of this right, *because they are not allowed to speak in the Church*; for they, at least, may speak in the Church-yard. Nor can servants be deprived of this right by any civil deed, since this can never alter that which is divine. And hence it will follow, that there has not been a right settlement in our Church; for this never was the scheme they went upon. And so you that are for this rule, had best throw up your calls, and venture upon a new moderation, where all may be allowed to vote without distinction of voices; and I hold you an equal wager, you'll stand a chance of losing your kirks, for all your popularity. Another absurdity is, That if the right is divine, then you must allow those not of our communion, to carry the choice if they can, unless you pretend that none can be real believers but these of our communion, or can prove that Christ's legacy gives this right only to believers, who are Presbyterians of your new model. Would not the asserting of either of these make a wise man *laugh*? And when these, who are admitted to full communion, have an equal right given them, does it not put it in the power of the weakest and most ignorant to carry

the election against all others, though they are well meaning people? Would not all men of sense employ the wisest to chuse a fit person to carry on any worldly plot and design? And would it be proper to put the choice of one for carrying on the best and highest design that can be, in the hands of the most ignorant and unskilful? Would it not make one *laugh*, to see boys have the choice of their masters, and not persons who are better judges of a master's qualifications? Why then would you palm a principle upon people, who cannot be judges of the truth, of what you say, and make them believe 'tis divine, when 'tis full of absurdities, and has no countenance from scripture? Why would you make them believe it was always the principle of the Church of *Scotland*, when you cannot but know the contrary? As long as Presbytery took place, from the Year 1578 to 1649, the election was in the Presbytery's hands, and from 1649 to 1690, it was lodged in the hands of the Session, exclusive of the people, from 1690, to 1712, it was in the hands of the heritors and elders, with the consent of the people, as has been explained. Is it not next to the highest impudence then, for you to palm a lie upon the world? *The lip of truth will be established for ever; but a lying tongue is but for a moment.*

5thly, You demand, *That none should be licensed, but such as have a competent stock of knowledge, and are acquainted with the power of Godliness, and the work of the Spirit of God upon their souls.* All very reasonable: but how come you to demand this, as if the contrary were practised? do you know of any who have past, whom Ministers could not look

look upon, in the judgment of charity, as acquainted with these things? But possibly you imagine, that good Ministers can see into the hearts of men, and by their spiritual taste judge of their state. If this is the meaning, I fear very few will be found acquainted with *true godliness*, or the *Spirit of God*, if you are judges. You can be very charitable in some cases, and as uncharitable in others. And some of you shew your selves excellent casuists, in giving the devil the shell, but God the kernel: but, for all your discerning spirit, I should not wish the devil had the power of cracking any of your shells, lest he should catch the kernel too.

6thly, You demand, *That in the grounds of public fasting, there be an acknowledgment of the great guilt of this land, in having gone into such a course of backsliding, contrary to the word of God; and that they make a full and particular enumeration of the steps of defection that have been made in our day.* In the preamble of this your demand, you discover the greatest presumption, self-conceit and pride. You tell us, "That the just causes and grounds of the Lord's controversy with the land have not been acknowledged for many years past." One would think, that the causes of fasting we have had mentioned all along, look pretty like to be *the grounds of the Lord's controversy*: but it seems you are acquainted with the counsels of heaven, and know other causes than all the Assembly many years past were acquainted with. Why do ye not mention these *steps of defection*, and shew that they are worse than the better practice of former times? It seems you are ashamed to tell us particularly what they are.

are. However, we may guess at your meaning : Some settlements you reckon violent ; the act of Assembly 1732 ; the proceedings of the Assembly 1733, and of their Commission ; the bad management of the Assembly 1734 ; and the procedure of the Synod of *Perth and Stirling*. These are the mighty causes of defection, contrary to the word of God, and these the grounds of the Lord's controversy with the land : nay, Atheism, infidelity, wickedness and impiety of life, misimproving of the blessed Gospel, are but small faults in comparison of what you hint at. Have you lost all sense of shame ? or are your heads turned light with your popularity ? May not the Church say of you, 3 *John*, 9, 10. *I wrote unto the church : but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doth, prating against us with malicious words : and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church ?* This same *Diotrephes* and you look pretty like *sister and brother bairns*. You would have the whole Church bow the knee to you, and make themselves a derision to all about them, by inserting things, as causes of fasting, which would make every wise man break out into a loud buff of laughing. Would not the art of the Physician, administering cupping-glasses or a clyster, do as well for one whose head is swimming, as strict and sound reasoning ?

III. I shall come now to offer some advices for the continuance of this merry fit your behaviour has put men into.

1. Be

A Laugh from a true-blue, &c. 63

1. Be sure to take up some popular principle, upon which your whole behaviour and conduct may turn; but be sure never to examine whether it be right or wrong, if you think it will be taking: And to make it go the better down, assert boldly that it is founded upon the word of God, the avowed principle of our Church, and set down *verbatim* in the *Book of Discipline*, and contained in all the Reformed *Confessions of Faith*. This will take with those who know no better: And though the learned should call you *monstrous liars*, stand to your text still; and some will commend your steadiness, and others *laugh* at your weakness or wickedness.

2. Never read one word of what is written on the other side, and carefully dissuade your followers from doing it. If you can make them take all you say upon your single word, and some texts of Scripture perverted, or some unfair quotations: this will do your business exactly, raise your reputation, and considerably increase your income; and make some *laugh*, to see how dextrously you impose upon well-meaning people, and cheat them both out of their sense and substance. The following *Riddle* represents this pretty well:

*I seek my self incessantly,
Yet daily do my self deny.*

3. Load all who oppose you with the greatest infamy and reproach you can invent. If they contradict your fancies, call them *Children of backsliders*, *Instruments of Satan*, and *Avowed enemies to our constitution*; and such as are *shouldering Christ out of his government*, committing rapes upon his spouse, and robbing her of those privileges left her in *Christ's legacy*. No matter though you should know all this to be false, if it raise your own reputation, and make you the idols of the unhappily misled people, making them cry out, *The glorious Four for ever*. Your sly management, and their blind applauses, will make some *laugh*, when they cast their eye on the following *Riddle*:

*My heart is false, and yet it's true:
My name's the same, and yet it's new.*

4. If your adversaries offer to correct you for your behaviour, protest against them to such free, faithful judicatures as shall be of your way of thinking; and this will bring you off, say and do what you please: for whenever they offer to find fault with you, or censure you, tell them they are *lifting up Ecclesiastical authority against the rule of the word*, *undermining the foundation*, and *breaking down the fences of doctrine*, *worship and government*, when they offer to suspend you. By this means, you'll pass for men of courage; and every body of sense will *laugh* at your barefac'd and impudent boldness, since this is so like the following *Riddle*:

To

*To some I perfect haired bear,
Yet keep the law of love entire.*

5. When you meet with just correction, give it out every where, that the whole Church, your selves excepted, are guilty of soul-ruining apostasy and defection; and that therefore you now erect your selves into a pure and spotless Presbytery, and are to take the care of all the Churches upon your able shoulders, to rectify wrongs, and redress grievances. No matter tho' you should be called the *Dan Quixotes* of the age: Tell you are now to preach up oppressed truth in city and country, a Gospel which none of the corrupt teachers of the Church are acquaint with. No matter though the Apostle say, *Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, let him be accursed*: Go you on to do every thing without your line, and your Knight-errantry will make every one laugh. The following Riddle in the literal sense is a picture of your conduct:

*The work is great I'm call'd unto,
And yet I nothing have to do.*

6. Give out, that you had much rather suffer affliction with the Church of *Scotland* now in the wilderness, than enjoy all the advantages of the Church of *Scotland* established by law; but stick by the advantages of the establishment as long as you can: And it will make good natur'd people laugh, to see how pawkie you are, in securing to your selves the *leeks, onions and garlick* of *Egypt*, and the *manna* of the wilderness at the same time. This will be a comment on another of honest Mr. *Ralph's* Riddles:

*I'm pinch'd, and yet I have no scant;
I'm poor, and yet I never want.*

7. Lest you should not be sufficient for the great work you design, make haste to license such young men as have a greater stock of wild fire, than of true grace or solid learning; such as will come up all your lengths, and perhaps go some steps beyond you, wild as you are: no matter though they *lick some of the butter off your bread*. And if these should not be sufficient, call in some of the *Jesuites* to your assistance: and then, in time, you may have sufficient instruments for overturning our constitution, and for making wretched ignorance and blind zeal ride in triumph; when learning, solid sense and true religion are trampled under feet. All this is said in a few dark words by the compendious author of the Riddles:

*I'm lib'ral, yet have nought to spare:
I'm black like hell, and yet I'm fair.*

Spectatum admissi, risum teneatis amici!



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